

## **SOFT TISSUE/WHIPLASH INJURIES**

In a car accident or other motor vehicle collision, a very common injury that will occur is whiplash. Whiplash results when there is hyperextension of the neck from being jerked forward followed by hyperflexion, or a backwards movement of the neck. These physical insults to the neck can cause serious injuries to a neck and upper torso, such as the upper rhomboids and trapezium. The damage caused by whiplash can also include intervertebral joint and disc damage, damage to the ligaments and cervical spine injury and other orthopedic injuries. In severe car collisions, this type of motion can also cause traumatic and mild traumatic brain injury.

When intervertebral joints and discs are damaged during a whiplash injury, the muscles and nerves of the spine will also often become damaged in such a way as to cause future pain and suffering. Some whiplash accidents may permanently damage the tissues around the neck which can make the whiplash injury victim more susceptible to injury in the future. A civil claim for damages for whiplash injuries will include claims for pain and suffering, lost wages, and past and future medical expenses.

Ten Percent of all whiplash injuries result in permanent disability in auto accident crash cases.

We recognize that one out of about every seven whiplash cases show a plaintiff's physical and mental symptoms are present for longer than three years from the date of the accident. Studies have shown that rear impact car wrecks even at speeds as low as 2.5 miles per hour can cause whiplash. Most of these studies have been written and conducted by the Society for Automotive Engineering (SAE) who has conducted extensive research regarding whiplash injuries. Among these and other respected groups, it is well documented that low velocity impacts are capable of causing significant injuries. These studies show that vehicles which do not sustain damage in low speed impacts can produce correspondingly higher dynamic loadings on their occupants than those which plastically deform under the same or possibly more severe impact conditions.

We advise you to ride in an ambulance to a hospital if you have been in a car wreck and experience any symptoms of whiplash. This will allow your neck to be stabilized by a hard or soft collar depending on your condition. You should tell the doctor how the injury occurred point out the approximate and direction of the vehicles involved in the motor vehicle collision or relate to the doctor specifically what the mechanism of your whiplash injury was. Always tell your doctor how severe your symptoms are. If the doctor asks on a follow up visit how you are doing, don't say "better" when you are still experiencing pain. It may seem obvious to you that you meant that you have improved but a defense attorney will argue that if you were "better" at that time, then something else must have happened to cause your pain. Instead, just tell the doctor the level and type of pain you are having and leave out vague terms like "ok" and "better". Obviously, if you are pain free, tell the doctor "I'm pain free". If your pain comes and goes, tell the doctor so.

Our New Orleans soft tissue attorneys have wide-ranging experience in dealing with soft tissue law. Soft tissue injuries occur in an unlimited variety of circumstances and are at times difficult to accurately detect. Soft tissue injuries occur in situations such as slips and falls, work related accidents, car and motorcycle accidents, and other types of situations which put a strain on the body. Soft tissue injuries that go untreated can last indefinitely and can exacerbate preexisting injuries. A mild soft tissue injury can cause the person to feel soreness in the muscles and at the other end of the spectrum, a person could be afflicted with chronic recurring pain that cannot be reduced without physical therapy, medication or professional medical help. If you believe that you are the victim of soft tissue injury in Louisiana due to someone else's carelessness, contact the soft tissue damages law firm at MARK W. SMITH & ASSOCIATES

A contusion or bruise is a soft tissue injury that is often the result of blunt force being applied to the body like a punch, kick, fall, or drop. The result will be pain, swelling, and discoloration. Contusions can also be either mild or severe. Mild bruising will usually heal over time without medical intervention whereas serious contusions require medical assistance.

Another form of soft tissue injury is a strain, which is an injury to a muscle or tendon, and can be caused by overuse, force, or over-extension. If a tear in the muscle occurs, surgery may be necessary. Sprains are injuries that specifically afflict the ligaments and can be caused by twisting the muscle and ligament in a way that is unexpected and painful such as a twist or when rolling pressure is applied. Sprains are commonly found to affect the knees, ankles, wrists, shoulders and even the hips. A sprain that frequently occurs is known as whiplash.

One reason that whiplash frequently occurs in car accidents is due to the fact that the head and neck are often the last to move and react. When this happens, the body moves forward quickly while the neck remains stationary and when body returns to its starting position, the neck receives sheering energy. Almost every person who has sustained injury in a vehicle has experienced whiplash to some degree because the mechanics of the body are consistent in automobile crashes.

The effects of whiplash are very frequently not felt immediately following an accident. It will likely be a two to four days before the pain will be felt, but once it sets in, it can be severely debilitating and disabling. The neck becomes stiff due to inflammation and spasms can occur as the body's involuntary reaction to pain. Severe stiffness and discomfort is usually also felt in the shoulders and arms. Tingling of the fingers and severe headaches are also common symptoms of whiplash injury.

Should you experience any of these symptoms after being involved in a motor vehicle accident or some other type of injury as a result of the negligence of another person, contact the soft tissue injury damages attorneys law firm at MARK W. SMITH & ASSOCIATES.